

Message Text

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CONFIDENTIAL PONTA DELGADA 0268

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJECT: REGIONAL GOVERNMENT SNUBS ALMEIDA SANTOS SEND-OFF

REF: PONTA DELGADA 0259(DTG 1720Z APR 78)(NOTAL)

1. AZOREAN REGIONAL GOVERNMENT (RGA) OFFICIALS POINTEDLY DID NOT SEE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ANTONIO ALMEIDA SANTOS AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM MINISTER RUI PENA OFF AT THE PONTA DELGADA AIRPORT AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE FORMER'S TEMPESTUOUS SOJOURN IN THE AZORES. DESPITE THE GOP'S TACTICAL SWITCH IN THE CHARACTER OF ALMEIDA SANTOS' MISSION FROM A PURELY POLITICAL TO AN OSTENSIBLY OFFICIAL ONE FOLLOWING HIS MANHANDLING BY IRATE "RETORNADOS" APRIL 15, ACTING RGA PRESIDENT RAUL SANTOS CHOSE TO IGNORE THAT DISTINCTION ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE RGA HAD NOT BEEN INFORMED OF THE CHANGE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ESTABLISHED PROCEDURES. RAUL SANTOS WAS ACTING ON DIRECT ORDERS FROM RGA PRESIDENT MOTA AMARAL NOW IN LISBON. EFFORTS BY MINISTER OF THE REPUBLIC GALVAO DE FIGUEREIDO AND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT ALVARO MONJARDINO TO ALTER THAT DECISION PROVED FRUITLESS.

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2. LATER THE ACTING RGA PRESIDENT AGREED TO RECEIVE ALMEIDA SANTOS AND PENA IN HIS OFFICE AS PRIVATE CITIZENS. HOWEVER, IN THE END, THE TWO MINISTERS DECIDED TO SKIP THE VISIT, AND POSSIBLE SECURITY PROBLEMS, ALTOGETHER AND DEPARTED DIRECTLY FOR LISBON WITHOUT AGAIN LEAVING PONTA DELGADA'S NOW WELL GUARDED AIRPORT.

COMMENT: ASIDE FROM ISSUING A DE RIGOR CONDEMNATION OF THE PHYSICAL ATTACK ON ALMEIDA SANTOS AT THE SOCIALIST PARTY HEADQUARTERS IN PONTA DELGADA, THE PSD CONTROLLED REGIONAL GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN DETERMINED TO KEEPS ITS DISTANCE FROM WHAT IT CONSIDERS ALMEIDA SANTOS' PATENTLY PARTISAN AND DISRUPTIVE VISIT TO THE REGION. RGA OFFICIALS APPARENTLY DECIDED THAT GIVEN THE STRONG POPULAR RESENTMENT AGAINST THE STATIONING OF CONTINENTAL RIOT POLICE IN PONTA DELGADA, THE RGA STOOD ONLY TO LOSE FROM EVEN A PURELY PROTOCOLARY DEMONSTRATION OF RESPECT FOR THE DEPARTING DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER.

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